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**AISI Cycle 5 Overview**

**September 2012 – June 2015**

June 2012

**Project Title**

Knowing Yourself as a Critical Thinker: Embedding Assessment AS Learning Into Critical Thinking in an Inclusive Environment

**Project Overview**

Parkland School Division is coming off of a successful AISI Cycle 4 where we were *Challenging Students to Think Critically*. Our work on assessment from AISI Cycle 3 has spring boarded into a new report card where teachers are reporting on student performance in relation to both knowledge and skills. While we have made great strides in these areas, we believe that to fully leverage these practices, teachers need additional targeted time and support to make purposeful connections between these two paradigm shifting instructional models.

It is essential that young people entering the world of work today have the competencies to function effectively in a changing workplace including critical thinking and problem solving, and self-direction and personal management. While PSD teachers have been reporting on the improvement in students’ critical thinking abilities through Cycle 4, instruction in Cycle 5 will now be structured to allow students to identify and articulate their own level of learning and problem solving abilities.

This project will be implemented across Parkland School Division, in all schools and at all grade levels. While monitoring the impact of this change in instructional focus for individual students in the grade 7 and 10 cohorts for three years, sub groups of students (FNMI, LD, and behavior) will also be identified and tracked to ensure that all students are benefitting. This monitoring will satisfy the increased research focus and accountability expectations outlined for provincial Cycle 5 projects.

**Learning Goals**

* All students are able to assess their learning and develop an improvement plan.
* All students are problem solvers and critical thinkers.
* All students gain the skills to be successful independent learners in their learning environment.
* All students are motivated to learn.
* Teachers are embedding assessment AS learning in their teaching practice.
* Teachers are embedding critical thinking in their teaching practice.
* A common language around assessment AS learning exists in Parkland School Division.
* A common language around critical thinking exists in Parkland School Division.
* Students are well prepared for life and work environments.

**Research Question**

To what extent does embedding assessment AS learning into the critical thinking model impact student engagement and performance in an inclusive learning environment?

**Definitions** (as per AAC and TC2)

Assessment As Learning – For the purposes of this AISI project, PSD will be focusing on the student involved aspects of assessment for learning. This includes self-reflection and goal setting along with peer coaching.

Self-Reflection – Considering the quality of one’s own work by applying criteria; requires that a student feels safe enough to be honest in making objective observations about the work

Peer Coaching – One student considering the quality of another’s work and providing feedback by applying certain criteria to help improve performance; requires a non-threatening and supportive relationship between peers

Critical Thinking – Thinking using criteria, standards by which something can be judged or decided. Typically a four step process is followed:

1. Brainstorm criteria.
2. Select the most important criteria.
3. Assemble evidence about each of the criterion for each option.
4. Determine which option best meets the criteria.

Thinking critically IS NOT about criticizing. Critical thinking IS about making a judgment in light of relevant criteria and is supported by evidence.

**Research**

“Research and practice are interconnected: research informs practice and practice informs research. The previous cycles of AISI have enabled action-oriented and site-based research in schools across the province. This foundational work needs to be further developed and taken to the next level in order to enable greater innovation, to develop the capacity of teachers as researchers, and to strengthen the learning that can be drawn from AISI projects.” (Handbook for AISI Cycle 5 Projects – 2012-2015, p. 2)

Data collection will primarily be done at the Center For Education. More information to follow.

* Cohort - PSD grade 7 and 10 students
  + Sub Cohorts
    - Gr. 7 LD students, behavior students, and FNMI students
    - Gr. 10 LD students, behavior students, and FNMI students
* Data Collection
  + Provincial Data
    - Grade 7
      * PAT 6 (baseline), 9 and K & E 9 – Language Arts
        + Synthesizing Ideas questions results
      * PAT 6 (baseline), 9 and K & E 9 – Social Studies
        + Skills & Processes questions results
    - Grade 10
      * PAT 9 (baseline) – Language Arts
        + Synthesizing Ideas questions results
      * English 30-1, 30-2, & 30-4 Diploma (in the 3rd year of the project)
        + Infer, Apply & Analyze questions results
      * PAT 9 (baseline) – Social Studies
        + Skills & Processes questions results
      * Social 30-1 & 30-2 Social Studies (in the 3rd year of the project)
        + Evaluation & Synthesis questions results
  + Local Data
    - Student Performance Data
      * Gr. 7 – 9 (3 times per year)
        + Report card indicators for the following subjects and skills:

Language Arts – Writing – Organization

Social Studies – Thinking & Problem Solving and Research & Critical Inquiry

Math – Problem Solving/Reasoning

Science – Reflect & Interpret

* + - * Gr. 10 – 12 (at semester change – twice each year)
        + Teachers will be provided an electronic survey for their students with the corresponding curricular areas and K – 9 report card indicators to complete using their professional judgment.
    - Teacher Survey Data
      * AISI Cycle 4 Teacher Survey (baseline)
      * Annual teacher survey for a description of their implementation of assessment AS learning and critical thinking strategies.
  + Qualitative Data
    - Student, Teacher, & Parent Focus Groups
      * A Fall 2012 meeting plus annual follow up meetings to report on the implementation and impact of assessment AS learning and critical thinking strategies.
    - Teacher Survey Data
      * AISI Cycle 4 Teacher Survey (baseline)
      * Annual teacher survey for reflection on their implementation and the impact of assessment AS learning and critical thinking strategies.

**Implementation Options**

In PSD, AISI Cycle 5 is moving further along in the work we have done in Cycle 3 on Assessment and the work that we have done in Cycle 4 on Critical Thinking. Both concepts are of equal importance. As PSD has spent extensive time and resources in both of these areas, it is important for administrators and teachers to know that there are plenty of existing resources to support implementation.  **Each school will be asked to include their learning coaches in their school based AISI work as well as choosing a minimum of one other implementation model.**

Learning Coach Support

Learning Coaches will model lessons, observe students and provide feedback, facilitate lesson study or other professional learning structures, facilitate data conversations to improve instruction and/or assist in planning.

Additional possible models for school based implementation include:

Critical Thinking Lead Teacher Release Time

Planning for the Cycle 4 lead teacher (or someone with expertise and understanding the TC2 model) to support teachers in the classroom with the implementation of strategies related to critical thinking and assessment AS learning.

Lesson Study Model

Working in a small group, teachers collaborate with one another, meeting to discuss learning goals, to plan an actual classroom lesson (called a "research lesson"), to observe how it works in practice, and then to revise and report on the results so that other teachers can benefit from it. (Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesson_study>)

Critical Thinking Teacher Or Assessment Specialist In Residence

A TC2 or AAC facilitator would be contracted to be in the school to work with teachers to prepare and demonstrate lessons in the classroom incorporating critical thinking and/or student-involved assessment strategies.

Learning Services Support

* Facilitators would use exemplar lessons (from AAC, TC2, LearnAlberta, insidePSD) as a PD framework for staff development time on PD days or as per invitations from schools.
* Individual teacher, school level teams, and/or administration support as requested could be provided.

Video Lesson Analysis

* Teachers working together to deliver and video tape lessons for analysis.
  + Recording teachers to analyze whether a technique was delivered effectively.
  + Recording students to analyze the learning and assessment process.
* There are also existing video footage resources from Alberta Ed, Learn Alberta, and AAC for teachers to analyze.
* This could be incorporated into the lesson study model.

External PD Providers for Catalyst Sessions

* Workshops offered by schools and/or learning services.
* Archived webinars – individual teachers, groups of teachers, whole staff.
* Possible providers - ERLC, AAC, TC2, ATA

School-Based or Inter-School PLC Work

Intentionally creating structured groups of teachers who meet regularly to work on self-determined activities with a focus on action related directly to classroom implementation. Examples of activities could be a book study, working through AAC and/or TC2 resources, sharing information from external PD activities, co-planning lessons, etc.

**Planning & Reporting**

As in previous AISI Cycles, schools will be asked to complete an annual AISI plan in the fall and summary report at year end to provide information to populate the PSD Annual AISI Progress Report. More information will follow in September 2012.

**AISI Cycle 5 Budget**

Schools will continue to account separately for AISI funds allocated to them on an annual basis. AISI funds may be spent as follows for items directly related to teacher professional development and instruction with assessment AS learning and/or critical thinking strategies:

Professional Learning

* Substitute costs for release time for teachers to support other teachers in the classroom with implementation of AISI strategies.
* Substitute costs to release teachers for AISI professional learning activities.
* Travel/accommodation/meal costs incurred at AISI professional learning activities.
* Fees for external experts or registration fees for AISI professional learning activities.

Equipment

A maximum of 10% of the budget may be spent on equipment as long as their purchase is appropriate to the AISI project. This may include computers, interactive whiteboards and other technology items.

Any other expenditures will require the pre-approval of the AISI Coordinator.

**Questions or Support**

Carolyn Jensen is the AISI Coordinator and can help you with your project implementation.

Learning Services Facilitators are available to assist in a variety of ways with the planning, delivery and follow up of AISI professional development activities.